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"Why the United States Must Deploy a National Missile Defense"
Core Course 5 Paper

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"In 15 to 20 years, when very accurate missiles with mass destruction warheads are available to Third World nations, the US will need a regional, wide area air defense force to duplicate on a grand scale the Patriot's pivotal role of defanging the Scud "
Lt Gen Chuck Horner--1991(Fulghum18-19)

General Horner made this comment over five years ago when, as the Joint Forces Air Component Commander for Desert Storm, he was confronted with the new terror weapon of choice for Third World despots--the Scud missile. In fact, Iraq's launching of nearly 90 Scud missiles at Saudi Arabia and Israel, accounted for 25 percent of US casualties, and almost caused Israel to enter the war, thereby threatening the fragile allied coalition. (Joseph and Payne 1) It also caused the intelligence community to reevaluate the threat posed by ballistic missiles and their potential nuclear, biological, and chemical payloads. This reexamination was the catalyst for President Bush's redirection of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), which he announced during his State of the Union address to the American public in January 1991

President Bush said, "looking forward, I have directed that the SDI program be refocused on providing protection from limited ballistic missile strikes, whatever their source. Let us pursue an SDI program that can deal with any future threat to the United States, to our forces overseas, and to our friends and allies." (Cooper and Hadley 2) President Bush's scaled back version of SDI, called Global Protection Against Limited Strikes (GPALS), would have provided worldwide protection from a limited number of missiles (up to 200), and was much more affordable than the previous SDI concept Further, President Bush's approach conceptually made the transition from a Cold War National Security Strategy of containment and deterrence through Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), or mutual vulnerability, to a post-Cold War strategy of deterrence and defense.

While the Gulf War experience promoted widespread support for Theater Missile Defenses (TMD), National Missile Defense (NMD) has not received the same backing. (Joseph and Payne 1) For example, President Clinton took a radically different view of the need for a National Missile Defense (NMD) system from President Bush President Clinton discarded the GPALS concept, withdrew the proposed Bush-Yeltsin amendments to the 1972 US-Soviet Union (FSU) Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, and discounted the threat to the continental United States Further, the Clinton Administration formulated a National Security Strategy of engagement and enlargement that did not support deployment of a National Missile Defense system In essence President Clinton has indefinitely postponed any NMD fielding decision Further, President Clinton's policy used the 1972 ABM

Treaty as the centerpiece of the US-Russian strategic relationship, and thus reverted to a Cold War reliance on Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD). (Cooper 88)

Only two years after his election, however, President Clinton reassessed his earlier view of the missile threat and issued Executive Order 12938 on November 14, 1994, which declared a national emergency with respect to the threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles and nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons of mass destruction (WMD). One year later he reaffirmed the seriousness of the threat when he said

> On November 14, 1994, by Executive Order 12938, **I declared a national emergency** with respect to the unusual and **extraordinary threat to the national security**, foreign policy , and economy of the United States **posed by the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons** ('weapons of mass destruction') and the means of delivering such weapons. Because the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and means of delivering them continues to pose an **unusual and extraordinary threat to national security**, foreign policy, and economy **of the United States**, the national emergency declared on November 14, 1994, must continue in effect beyond November 14, 1995. **Therefore...I am continuing the national emergency declared in Executive Order No. 12938 [Emphasis added]**
>
> William J Clinton, The White House, November 8, 1995 (Clinton 9)

Curiously, while President Clinton recognized the threat, he has not fundamentally modified his policies to address this issue. In fact, the Administration has repeatedly rebuffed Congressional initiatives to field a National Missile Defense (NMD) system. For example, when presented with the Defense Authorization Bill, the "Defend America Act" of 1996, from the 104th Congress, which called for fielding of a National Missile Defense by 2003, President Clinton vetoed it, and in fact contradicted his Executive Order by saying "there is no foreseeable missile threat justifying deployment of a national missile defense," (Spence 20) and asserted the "bill's provisions calling for one would put US policy 'on a collision course' with the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty " (Spence 20) Unfortunately, both positions are wrong.

This analysis presents the three most common justifications for the Administration's to not deploy an NMD system. demonstrates the weakness of each, and recommends changes to current policy First, while the Clinton Administration has acknowledged the threat to our forces overseas, they have discounted the threat of attack to the US There is strong evidence that the threat is actually increasing and unless the US responds now, the "threat will outpace the nation's ability to deploy effective defenses" (Joseph and Payne 1) and will leave the United States vulnerable Second, critics of NMD and TMD systems cite adherence to the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty between the US and the now-defunct Soviet Union as inviolable They are wrong The 1972 ABM Treaty is a relic of the bipolar world and is no longer a useful mechanism in a multipolar environment

In fact, President Yeltsin suggested a new international framework to address both arms control and proliferation in 1992. Rather than accepting this proposal, President Clinton dismissed the concept and returned to the Cold War mutual vulnerability construct dictated by his Adminstration's strict interpretation of the 1972 ABM Treaty Ironically this interpretation of the treaty was viewed as "less threatening" to the Russians President Clinton then proposed a policy of NATO Expansion, which was in fact very threatening to Russia. Third, while some critics suggest NMD systems will not work, recent development efforts show technology now provides the opportunity to rapidly and affordably field an NMD system. Moreover, the system can be fielded in a time-phased way by initially fielding ground-based interceptors (cued by improved surveillance satellites) and transition to more capable space-based interceptors as technologies come to fruition

Threat

The end of the Cold War actually marked the end of a period of relatively stable world order and ushered in a period of transition and turbulence unchecked by the restraints imposed by the former Cold War system of alliances and proxies. Yet, while the end of the Cold War brought an acknowledged reduction in the threat of a massive nuclear missile exchange with the Former Soviet Union (FSU), the new world order is now more threatening, albeit on a more limited basis, than before Not only do Russia and China have significant nuclear missile inventories and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) capable of threatening the survival of the United States, a significant Third World threat has emerged from pariah states like Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria, and North Korea which by the end of the decade, may be able to strike the continental US. (Cooper 92)

The Clinton Administration has recently cited a controversial National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) to suggest the threat of attack to the US by ballistic missiles and nuclear, biological, or chemical warheads is at least 10-15 years away It has therefore postulated the US can postpone the development and deployment of an NMD system, until well after the turn of the century (Lodal and Carter 104) Recent evidence suggests both positions are wrong This section shows there is not only a current threat posed by Russia and China, but also that several Third World nations may threaten the US by the turn of the century. If an NMD system is not fielded before the threat materializes, the threat will precede the US ability to defend itself, leaving the nation vulnerable

The threat posed by major nuclear powers like Russia and China continues to be significant and should not be discounted For example, Andrei Grachov, a FSU communist party official recently provided the US with a

wake up call when he said "[in the FSU] you have the same explosive mixture you had in Germany in the 1930's The humiliation of a great power Economic troubles The rise of nationalism. You should not underestimate the danger " (Payne *Missile Defense* 99) If Grachov is correct, the upcoming Russian Presidential election could be a major turning point in the Russian movement toward democratization. A return to the pre-1990s system of government would have significant implications for US-Russian relations Further, the Administration's insistence on NATO expansion, threatens the Russians, causing them to consider deployments of theater nuclear missiles, and reconsider START reductions. (Yurkin 17)

Specifically, Russian military expert, Anton Surikov, recently warned that NATO Expansion, promoted by the Clinton Administration, threatens the Russians. He cautioned that if NATO expanded to the Baltics, Russia would send troops to Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia, and "any attempts by the alliance to oppose it by force can trigger a world nuclear catastrophe." (Yurkin 17) In what appears to be the beginning of renewed tensions, he also warned "that Russia may deploy tactical nuclear weapons on its border with Poland and in the southern regions to counterbalance NATO expansion to Poland, the Czech republic and Hungary." (Yurkin 17) Additionally, the chance of a rogue military commander launching an attack against the US is a distinct possibility For example, scenarios like the attempted coup of President Gorbachev in 1991 raise serious questions about the command and control of the Russian nuclear forces.

China also presents a threat to the survival of the United States Although the Chinese nuclear arsenal and delivery systems are a fraction of Russia's, they still pose a clear and present danger, highlighted recently during the China-Taiwan issue During the heat of the crisis, Chinese officials allegedly stated the US should stay out of China's domestic disputes and if the US intervened "China was capable of lobbing nuclear warheads at Los Angeles." (Embarrassing 18) Further, China's leadership succession issue has not been resolved and some recent speakers at the National Defense University suggested the leadership transition may spur nationalistic tendencies and foster internal power struggles with People's Liberation Army (PLA) leaders rising to power This situation. fueled by anti-Americanism and flashpoints with the US, like Taiwan, could lead to catastrophic results

While both Russia and China pose a current threat, perhaps even more alarming is the rapidly emerging threat from Third World nations More specifically, the proliferation of WMD and ballistic missile technology to Third World nations threatens our troops, civilians and allies overseas and by the end of the decade, some Third

World nations are expected to be capable of striking the continental United States. President Clinton's Executive Order established the seriousness of the threat from Third World nations posed by the proliferation of WMD and ballistic missile technology Elaborating on the President's comments, Representative Curt Weldon recently said "twenty-five countries have or are developing weapons of mass destruction, [and] a similar number of countries have or are seeking to acquire ballistic missiles." (Weldon 66) Further, by the year 2000, Hadley predicts we could see nine nations with nuclear, ten with biological, and thirty with chemical weapons. (Hadley 30) Finally, former Director of Central Intelligence, James Woolsey testified before the Senate in January 1994, "ballistic missiles are becoming the weapon of choice for nations unable to strike their enemies at long range " (Weldon 66) For example, "recent reports indicate the Taepo-Dong 2 missile that North Korea is developing could have a range of 10,000 km, capable of reaching America's West Coast Even more ominous is the fact the missile may be ready for deployment as early as the year 2000." (Weldon 64)

Further, while a rule of thumb is it normally takes ten years to develop indigenous ballistic missile and WMD capabilities, Third World nations are able to short circuit the development process by acquiring systems from nations like China and Russia and make them operational within just a few years. (Hadley 30) The Russians are now marketing and selling converted SS-25 nuclear missiles for space launch activities. (Weldon 64) As commercial products, i e. space launch vehicles, the "SS-25s will not be under the command and control of the Russian nuclear forces Rather they will be under civilian control, where the likelihood of their being sold, transported, or simply misused is greatly increased " (Weldon 64) Additionally, the Director of Central Intelligence, John Deutch recently testified that there were a half a dozen documented cases of smuggling nuclear materials out of Russia. (Robbins 1) These cases caused the Director of the Arms Control Disarmament Agency, John Holum, to say "I don't have confidence that they even have good inventory of their missile material, let alone a good handle on how to protect it." (Robbins 1) It is precisely this combination of the availability of ballistic missiles and nuclear materials that led President Clinton to issue his "state of emergency "

Clearly, the sale of ballistic missiles and WMD from Russia and China to rogue nations like Iraq, Libya, Iran, Syria, and North Korea validates this threat assessment For example, after the US bombed Tripoli in 1986, Qadhdhafi showed that he had the will and intent, if not the capability, to strike the US when he said

> Did not the Americans almost hit you yesterday when you were asleep in your homes? If they know you have a deterrent force capable of hitting the United States they would not be able to hit you Because if

> we had possessed a deterrent, missiles that could reach New York, we would have hit in the same moment Consequently, we should build this force so that they and others will no longer think about an attack (Weldon 64)

Critics of NMD discount such evidence and suggest the US is not vulnerable to ballistic missiles now, nor will it be for the foreseeable future Ash Carter, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy echoed these thoughts when he said "to go ahead with a National Missile Defense . isn't warranted by the threat" (Lodal and Carter 104) Ironically, his predecessor, Stephen Hadley, suggested just the opposite. Hadley said "the threat to be countered now is accidental and unauthorized launches from the Soviet Union and elsewhere and outright attacks by third world nations" (Asker 28)

Additionally, the incentives for Third World nations to acquire ballistic missiles and WMD warheads have actually increased since the end of the Cold War when the FSU and the US in essence kept things in check. Third World regimes may risk international scorn for not cooperating on issues such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in order to preserve their options. (Clark 84) For example, Les Aspin, then Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, quoted the Indian Defense Minister after the Gulf War who when asked "What is the lesson of Desert Storm for Third World countries? He said, 'The lesson of Desert Storm for Third World countries is don't attack the United States unless you have nuclear weapons." (Clark 77) It is not difficult to imagine North Korea invading South Korea, while holding US decision makers hostage with the threat of a nuclear attack against the US and its allies, like Japan, for intervening. The destabilizing effect of an intercontinental, nuclear armed, ballistic missile in the hands of the North Koreans is also truly alarming since their command and control of the weapon, and rationale for its use is different from the essentially "rational" opponent we faced in the FSU Finally, this analysis clearly shows the Clinton Administration's view of the threat is wrong There are many nations capable of striking the US by the end of the decade and the Administration's continued reliance on the ABM Treaty as a tool for arms control maintains US vulnerability against ballistic missiles and increases the incentive for nations to seek these capabilities for coercion, intimidation, or retaliation. (Spence 20)

ABM Treaty

The 1972 ABM Treaty and its 1974 protocol have been the centerpiece of debate between missile defense and arms control advocates for years This section focuses on the basic provisions of the Treaty, the limitations it imposes, and why its continued existence does not excuse the absence of an NMD capability

First, the provisions of the ABM Treaty applicable to this analysis are that it limits both the FSU and the US to one ground based missile interceptor site, located either around an offensive missile field or the nations' capital. (Space Law 161) Further, "if ground-based ABM systems based on other physical principles and including components capable of substituting for conventional ABM interceptor missiles, launchers, or radars are created in the future, the parties agree to discuss limitations on such systems " (Space Law 162) The Treaty also addresses space systems It states that the "United States and the Soviet Union may not develop, test, or deploy space-based ABM systems or components. (Article V) This is a comprehensive ban. It includes currently understood ABM technologies (that is interceptor missiles) as well as those concepts based on technologies yet to be fully developed or understood (that is, directed energy weapons)." (Space Law 161)

Second, these provisions significantly limit the potential development and deployment options for most elements of potential NMD systems, particularly space-based sensors and potential interceptors. For example, the significantly improved missile detection satellites being developed under the Air Force's Space Based Infrared Systems Program Office, in Los Angeles, CA, which are capable of precisely determining the launch locations and predicted impact points of ballistic missiles, would be prohibited from cueing interceptors from space in the "strict interpretation favored by the Clinton Administration." (Boldrick 85) This situation handcuffs the US from exploiting its technological advantage in areas such as space-based sensors, and potentially space-based interceptors, and other promising advanced concepts such as boost-phase intercept capabilities.

Third, the current debate surrounding the ABM Treaty is almost theological in its nature, with arms control and missile defense advocates squaring off against one another. The ABM Treaty was viewed by arms control advocates as "stabilizing" since in theory it did not allow comprehensive defenses which might allow one nation to launch a pre-emptive strike, and also be able to defend against the opponents' retaliatory strike. This limited form of defense was considered a necessary condition for deterrence and was coined Mutual Assured Destruction, since "each would be able--after an attack--to destroy the other." (Cooper 86)

On the other hand, there are those that question the relevance of the 1972 Treaty in a post-Cold War era Henry Kissinger, ironically one of the principal architects of the ABM Treaty, argued that "MAD was barely plausible with one nuclear opponent and makes no sense in the multipolar world of proliferating powers " (Cooper 89) Kissinger s feeling was shared by the Joint Strategic Planning Staff who advised former

Commander-in-Chief of Strategic Command, General Butler. The staff believed the nuclear deterrence that worked between two relatively rational superpowers does not apply in the Third World. They said:

> The third world is the scene of almost continuous violence at varying levels of intensity It is divided into regions where long-standing animosities, simmering resentment toward wealthier parts of the global community, personal ambitions of autocratic rulers, and the chronic absence of domestic constraints on aggressive behavior frequently erupt into violent conflicts. The proliferation of advanced weapons to third world militaries adds to the powder keg atmosphere. (Smith A14)

Moreover, Robert Joseph and Keith Payne recently suggested the US must field an NMD capability "because the conditions necessary for deterrence--mutual familiarity, understanding, communication, etc.--are less likely to pertain in the existing strategic environment than in the bipolar structure of the past." (Joseph and Payne 2) They argue "the absence of an effective NMD may undercut the ability of the United States to deter regional aggressors armed with long-range missiles. Such aggressor states may well judge US deterrence as incredible because of the aggressor's ability to launch retaliatory NBC missile attacks on US cities." (Joseph and Payne 2) Boldrick agrees. He suggests "arms control can work against, rather than for, national security. When the United States and the Soviet Union negotiated the ABM Treaty in 1972.. protection of strategic nuclear forces was envisioned as a better deterrent than protection of people." (Boldrick 84-85) But Saddam Hussein's actions in the Gulf War changed the rules. (Boldrick 85) Hussein employed a strategy of terrorizing civilians and population centers with Scuds. As other pariah states acquire more capable ballistic missiles, and more alarmingly, biological, chemical, or nuclear warheads, US population centers are likely targets and the US will need a NMD system capable of defending against them Thus, "missile defenses of the future will have to do more than deter an attack on strategic nuclear forces. They should also shield population centers from limited nuclear attack by terrorist states." (Boldrick 85)

Perhaps more importantly, the Russians have shown a remarkable willingness to depart from the ABM Treaty While the Clinton Administration clings to the strict interpretation of the ABM Treaty, and their belief that it is inextricably linked to START I and II, President Yeltsin has proposed initiatives to modify or replace the ABM Treaty while continuing to reduce nuclear stockpiles and delivery vehicles For example, "in January 1992, President Boris Yeltsin proposed that the United States and Russia cooperate on building a global protection system for the world community--while further reducing long-range nuclear arms " (Cooper 87) His proposal, presented to the UN General Assembly, was "in sharp contrast to long-standing arguments of the arms control

elite that either arms control or defenses are possible, but not both " (Cooper 87) Unfortunately, the Administration's zeal to maintain the ABM Treaty "derailed the program being made in that effort."(Cooper 88)

The preceding analysis showed the critics' arguments against an NMD system due to the threat and need to maintain the ABM Treaty are both wrong. It is now time to see how technology plays in the NMD equation.

Technology and Affordability

The Administration's desire to adhere to the ABM Treaty has resulted in significant funding cuts for NMD related technologies, and a policy to postpone any consideration of an NMD system deployment until after the turn of the century Further, critics of NMD argue that the US lacks the technology to affordably deploy a NMD system. Fortunately, the technology developments sponsored by the SDI organization in the 1980s and early 1990s prove the critics wrong and provide the US with alternatives to current policy. The purpose of this section is not to review all NMD options, but rather to illustrate concepts, the time-phasing, and the affordability aspects.

Scientists and engineers from industry and government developed several important breakthroughs over the last 13 years. These breakthroughs came in the form of improved space, ground, and sea-based sensors, sea and ground-based interceptors, and advanced development capabilities, such as boost-phase interceptors. In fact, if an NMD program is approved now, these systems will interact in a "system-of-systems" approach with space, ground, and sea-based assets working in harmony to detect and warn of ballistic missile launches, cue interceptors, and destroy targets by early in the 21st century. Further, cooperative ventures with Russia and other nations in many of these developments will act as confidence building measures and foster transparency, trust, and provide the very stability that critics argue will be lost by employing missile defenses.

Thus the past 13 years of SDI sponsored research and development all support the Congressional Republicans' demand for a 2003 NMD deployment The nation's investment in ground and sea-based radars, terminal defense weapons and their kill vehicles, have all paid off to afford the US the opportunity to develop and deploy credible TMD and NMD systems in a time-phased fashion. (Cooper 90-91) More specifically, Henry Cooper estimates that technological advances will "permit the deployment of effective and relatively inexpensive defenses beginning in three to four years " (Cooper 98) Stephen Hadley concurs His analysis of a US House of Representatives National Security Committee proposal shows the ability to deploy an initial NMD system capable of intercepting a limited number of ballistic missiles in four to seven years (Hadley 31) The initial capability

will rely on improved space-based sensors for detection and warning of missile launches and cueing for ground-based interceptors at one or more sites (Hadley 31) Additionally, this initial capability is affordable

Hadley estimates the ground-based interceptor capability will cost between $5 and $15 billion, depending on the system options. (Hadley 31) This deployment timeframe is consistent with this paper's earlier threat assessment which shows the capability for Third World states to threaten the US by the end of the decade. Further, Hadley's estimate of the initial capability is affordable, especially when considered against the cost of the destruction of just one US city Five to fifteen billion dollars pales in comparison to the enormous cost in terms of loss of life and complete disruption of economic, political, and social systems if a US city were attacked with a nuclear armed ballistic missile. This example is particularly ominous given Qadhdhafi's comments about attacking New York. Additionally, advanced concepts, currently in development, provide the opportunity to upgrade the system with more sophisticated capabilities, like a space-based laser, for boost-phase intercepts, at a relatively modest cost (Cooper 97) This capability allows interception of missiles over the attacker's territory, before they can maneuver or deploy decoys, and will act as a deterrent to nations thinking of using weapons of mass destruction since the fallout from a boost-phase intercept will land on the attacker. (Cooper 95)

Finally, some critics argue these concepts are not technologically feasible. (Weldon 66) However, this argument does not stand up under scrutiny First, Matthew Bunn, an acknowledged ABM expert and NMD opponent, admits "there is little doubt that it is technically possible to defend the United States against a handful of long-range ballistic missiles launched by accident, a mad commander, or a Third World country " (Bunn *Star Wars* 13) Second, NMD options can build upon the recent breakthroughs in advanced development projects and Theater Missile Defenses Third, history is replete with examples of naysayers who said things could not be done and were later proved wrong. Keith Payne cites several good examples from history to illustrate this point

> Rail travel at high speed is not possible because passengers, unable to breathe, would die of asphyxia.
> [Dr Dionysus Lamder (1793-1859), Professor of Natural Philosophy and Astronomy at University College. London]
>
> It is apparent to me that the possibilities of the aeroplane, which two or three years ago was thought to hold the solution to the [flying machine] problem, have been exhausted. and that we must turn elsewhere.
> [Thomas Alva Edison, 1895]
>
> This is the biggest fool thing we have ever done The bomb will never go off, and I speak as an expert in explosives [Admiral William Leahy advising President Truman on the atomic bomb 1945]
> (Payne *Star Wars* 65)

This section showed how technology now allows the US to respond to the threat, cooperatively engage with the Russians, and quickly field an affordable NMD system and sets the stage for the following recommendations

Recommendations

The following recommendations for an NMD system consider the constraints of the defense budget realities, however, they are not constrained by the limitations of the ABM Treaty They are provided for consideration by the Clinton Administration to modify existing policy

1 Immediately engage with the winner of the 1996 Russian elections to develop a cooperative approach to modify or rescind the 1972 ABM Treaty. Use the provisions from the Yeltsin-Bush agreements in 1992 as a starting point. Specifically, include the Standing Consultative Commission's (SCC) recommended amendments that would have: "Eliminated restrictions on development and testing of ABM systems and components; eliminated restrictions on radars and sensors; eliminated restrictions on the transfer of ABM systems and technologies; and permitted additional ABM deployment sites, as well as additional launchers and interceptors" (Joseph and Payne 4) Include the Russians as full partners in the development of technologies to support the defense against limited strikes, particularly from the Third World. The joint development initiatives could include advanced space-based sensor technology (an area the US and Russia have cooperated on in the past), space launch options, ground and space-based interceptor technology, and battle management developments However, if the Russians are unwilling to negotiate, the Administration should use its prerogative to withdraw from the ABM Treaty under Article XV which allows unilateral withdrawal with six months notice. (Cooper 91)

2 Support Congressional proposals to fully fund NMD development and plan for a deployment by 2003.

3 Continue to fund advanced technologies to provide a time-phased, improved NMD capability to both exploit new technology and counter enemy systems. It is particularly important to fund promising space-based capabilities. For example, funding for a very promising advanced concept, the space-based laser, which will intercept missiles in the boost-phase, needs to be jump-started The funding for this system was slashed to its "lowest level in more than twenty years. Yet the technology has matured to the point where such a deployment opportunity has been acknowledged even by the avowed skeptics of strategic defenses" (Cooper 97)

Conclusion

In summary, the US must pursue an aggressive time-phased National Missile Defense (NMD) system for three reasons First, the threat demands it. It will take approximately four years to field a system if the decision is made now and the system must precede the threat or the US will be vulnerable During the interim period, the US faces a limited threat of accidental launches from Russia and China, and by the turn of the century an increased threat from several Third World nations who may be incentivized to strike the US. In fact several Third World nations have already expressed the will and intent to attack, and are merely waiting for the capability Further, deterrence against Third World nations is problematic at best, especially given the Clinton Administration's strict adherence to the ABM Treaty which maintains US vulnerability Second, the timing is right to remove the ABM Treaty as an obstacle to NMD. The US should use the current debate in the 104th Congress as a catalyst for national debate on the issue to inform the American public of the current vulnerability Ironically, a recent poll illustrates that over 71 percent of Americans surveyed thought the US possessed a defense against a ballistic missile attack even though the US possesses no such capability (Weldon 65) Further, the timing is right to address the ABM Treaty with the winner of the 1996 Russian elections. The Treaty is a relic of the bipolar Cold War era and should either be significantly revised to address the multipolar nature of the threat or it should be rescinded. This paper recommended several proposed cooperative development efforts, including options to modify or rescind the ABM Treaty. The Russians should support these initiatives since they are more immediately threatened by Third World nations than the US and the historical precedent was established four years ago by President Yeltsin's proposals for a mutual defense shield against limited launches. This view is far more appropriate given the multipolar nature of the threat Third, technological developments over the past 13 years now provide us with the opportunity to quickly field improved missile detection, warning, and interceptor systems While the majority of the early NMD options rely on ground-based interceptors, these systems could be upgraded with advanced concepts, like space-based lasers, as they come to fruition. As a result of years worth of technology investment initiated with the SDI program, not only is the US capable of rapidly fielding a NMD systems, these systems are affordable, especially when compared to the potential costs of having no protection

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